

THAT LETTER BUREAU.

At the late meeting of the Kansas Reform Press association a committee was appointed to endeavor to make arrangements for a weekly letter from Topeka to the several papers of the state. The committee have in view, if possible, to furnish that letter free, or at most at the trifling cost of postage, and by the plan under consideration we think it can be done. Although we had held no regular meeting prior to our issue of last week we had some correspondence upon the subject and the committee was agreed upon the plan that should be attempted.

Last week we stated that certain parties had attempted to forestall any action the committee might desire to take by sending out circulars proposing to undertake this correspondence without authority of the committee. Mr. Ballard in his "Hurikin" says our statement was false. Let us see whether it was or not. The circular he sent out begins as follows:

"Mr., Editor of"

A Letter Bureau has been opened in accordance with the views expressed by the members of the Reform Press Association at its last meeting."

Now if he was starting this news bureau upon his own responsibility why did he make that statement. He knew very well that a committee had been appointed to carry out the views of the association, and he knew moreover, that he had no authority from the committee to say that his proposed letter was in accordance with the plan of the association.

We do not care how many letters Mr. Ballard writes nor what he gets for them, but we do not propose that he shall impose them upon the association under false colors. That is all upon this subject.

There are some other things that we desire to say, however, while writing about Mr. Ballard. We do not know him and would be sorry to do him an injustice; but his course in connection with the gulf and interstate railroad scheme has been such as to arouse suspicion that he and his associates are trying to bleed somebody; and the president and secretary of the provisional board appointed at the meeting recently held in this city to devise a plan for the building of such a road have therefore felt called upon to caution the public against imposition. This they have done in the daily papers of the city and in the ADVOCATE. We would remind Mr. Ballard that if he is intending to do a legitimate and honorable business in this city he is making a very unfortunate beginning.

We now desire to add a word in reference to the railroad scheme itself. We published the proceedings of the meeting held in this city and the plan as far as completed, which was adopted by that meeting. We understand this "People's Letter Bureau" complains that the ADVOCATE is not supporting the scheme. This is correct. While we recognize the importance of such a road, if it can be built, and stand ready to do all we can for it when a practicable plan is presented for its construction and

management, we do not consider that there is anything as yet to support. The plan presented is incomplete and vitally defective. This fact is now recognized by those most intimately connected with it, and it is proposed at the meeting on the 9th inst., to employ the ablest legal talent and endeavor to overcome the obstacles that present themselves, and devise a plan that is practicable, and that will afford safety to those who invest in it. If this is done satisfactorily the scheme will have no more ardent supporter than the ADVOCATE. If it is not done it will not merit support. This is the status of the railroad scheme and our feeling in regard to it at this time; and nothing could be more unfortunate for the scheme itself than premature and unauthorized solicitations for it by irresponsible parties.

One thing more, since Mr. Ballard has chosen to refer to it in a very uncalled for manner in this paper. He intimates that the electric light company declined to put lights in the rooms of his news bureau at the dictation of Mr. Hopkins. The facts are that he desired the company to make the connections for his benefit with the Populist League meter which would have made the league responsible for his light. To this Mr. Hopkins objected, and if the electric light company did not choose to put the lights in his office unless they were connected with the league meter, there was probably another reason for it rather than the "dictation" of Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Hopkins' "dictation" referred to nothing except the connection of the wires.

Now if we have done Mr. Ballard or his associates any injustice in these remarks we shall stand ready to make a correction at any time. The facts seem now to be as here stated. An honorable and straightforward course is always best in the long run and will command respect from enemies as well as friends, and it is good policy, especially for strangers in a community, to avoid even the appearance of evil, lest one be suspected of wrong intentions and sacrifice the confidence he might otherwise have hoped to gain.

RAILROADING AND SOCIALISM

Our Colorado correspondent replies in another column to our criticism upon his former communication. He says:

If the very broad meaning given to the term socialism in the ADVOCATE of December 13, is correct, every act of the state where self government exists is socialistic, the furnishing of a wagon road as much as a railroad. And further the state can divest any of her functions of their socialistic character by simply appointing a private individual or corporation to act for her in the place of her government. Yet both government and the corporation are her agents, one natural with general powers, the other special with specific powers and duties. It is not easy to see how this substitution changes the nature of the function.

We understand that our correspondent is correct in his statement of the functions that are socialistic in their character, but the distinction which he says it is difficult for him to see consists in this: When the function is performed by the state, it is per-

formed solely for the public good and with no idea of taxing the people for profit. Take the postal system as an example. The purpose of the government is to make it as nearly self-sustaining as possible, but not to tax the people for purposes of gain. If the power to conduct the postal system were to be delegated by the government to an individual or corporation, that individual or corporation would operate it, not alone for the public good, but for gain. Again; if the postal system as operated by the government should yield a revenue above cost of operation, the profit would accrue to all the people. It would go into the public treasury and be available for other public expenses; whereas in private or corporate hands the profits would go to individuals.

There is still another distinction in case of our railroad system in private hands. The power of taxation which is a function belonging alone to the state, is illegally delegated to private parties, and the people are afforded no safeguards against the abuses practiced of taxation of one class for the benefit of another, even to the extent of paying interest upon fictitious capital and dividends upon watered stock. It would seem that our correspondent would be able to see these distinctions.

He is undoubtedly correct about the power of individuals or corporations to construct roads or other public utilities where it is necessary to take private property for public use except as the agent of nation, state or municipality. He is right also in that the functions performed by railroad and other corporations are public functions. Our theory is that the delegation of these powers to individuals and corporations for private gain is illegal, that such delegation of power to tax one class for the benefit of another was never contemplated by the founders of the republic; and when they are so delegated the function performed ceases to be socialistic in its character because it is performed for private gain instead of solely for the public good.

A PUSILLANIMOUS DEMAGOGUE.

THE Topeka ADVOCATE prints a three column defense of Anarchist Clemens and his methods. And yet there are people who believe there is no sympathy for anarchy in the People's party.—Emporia Republican, December 23.

And the blatant demagogue who runs the Republican prints such pusillanimous paragraphs as the above for the purpose of fortifying the wall of prejudice that has been built up against Mr. Clemens; and he has neither the honesty nor the courage to publish what Mr. Clemens believes and teaches, or to name the "methods" to which he refers. If the editor of the Republican knows of any terrible doctrine that Mr. Clemens teaches or of any blood-curdling "method" that he has championed, why does he not publish it and thereby justify in the eyes of fair minded people the assaults that are made upon a reputable and talented citizen? This cowardly assassination of character and repu-

tation has gone far enough. The ADVOCATE not only published the defense alluded to, but it proposes to stand by it, and to designate by their proper title the cowardly curs who make a practice of assailing the character and reputation of good men only because they have the courage to be independent in their views and utterances. If you know anything wrong about Mr. Clemens let us have it, otherwise you write yourself down a villain in every paragraph like the above that finds a place in your columns.

FOSTER'S ASSETS DECREASED.

Tiffin, Ohio, December 28.—A few weeks ago, after ex-Secretary Charles Foster had completed negotiations to secure the funds, arrangements were made with his creditors' committee to settle at 50 cents on the dollar, but since that time, J. B. Gormley, assignee, says that errors have been discovered in the work of the appraisement which upset the whole arrangement and will require Mr. Foster to raise a much larger sum than he was led to believe would be required.

We have seen the above dispatch in quite a number of republican and democratic papers, and we have not seen it suggested by any of them that Mr. Foster is a repudiator on account of settling his indebtedness for 50 cents on the dollar. A good many railroads have gone into the hands of receivers recently, and it is expected that they will settle for a per cent. of their indebtedness, and we hear no talk about repudiation in their case. If a farmer, however, seeks merely a stay of execution in case of mortgage foreclosure in order to afford him an opportunity to redeem a home which represents the small savings of many years of toil and self-denial, he is a repudiator of the very wickedest kind; and any political party that dares to propose that he shall have such an opportunity, is sure to drive capital out of the country and ruin the credit of the state. It makes a vast difference whose ox is gored.

It will be remembered that certain republican papers in Topeka and elsewhere contained a sad story relating how some detestable tramps, "Lewelling's friends," as the papers designated them, broke into a Topeka church on Christmas eve and destroyed or carried away some of the good things that were prepared for Christmas. It was an exceedingly sad story. But it turns out that these "tramps" were Topeka boys, who, of course, were led to do this distasteful act by the governor's tramp circular. Hence it follows, according to the logic of republican papers, that all the once good people of this sanctimonious city of Topeka have lately been transferred into consummate scoundrels. That is just as reasonable a proposition as that all unemployed people on the road are thieves and beggars.

THE Industrial Sledge-Hammer, "Heat 1, Stroke 1," published at Meadville, Pa., is on our table asking an exchange. The scintillations of the first heat indicate abundance of fuel in the forge, and we hope that with each successive heat it may come out hotter and still hotter.